

THE DOCTRINE
OF
CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

A DISCOURSE

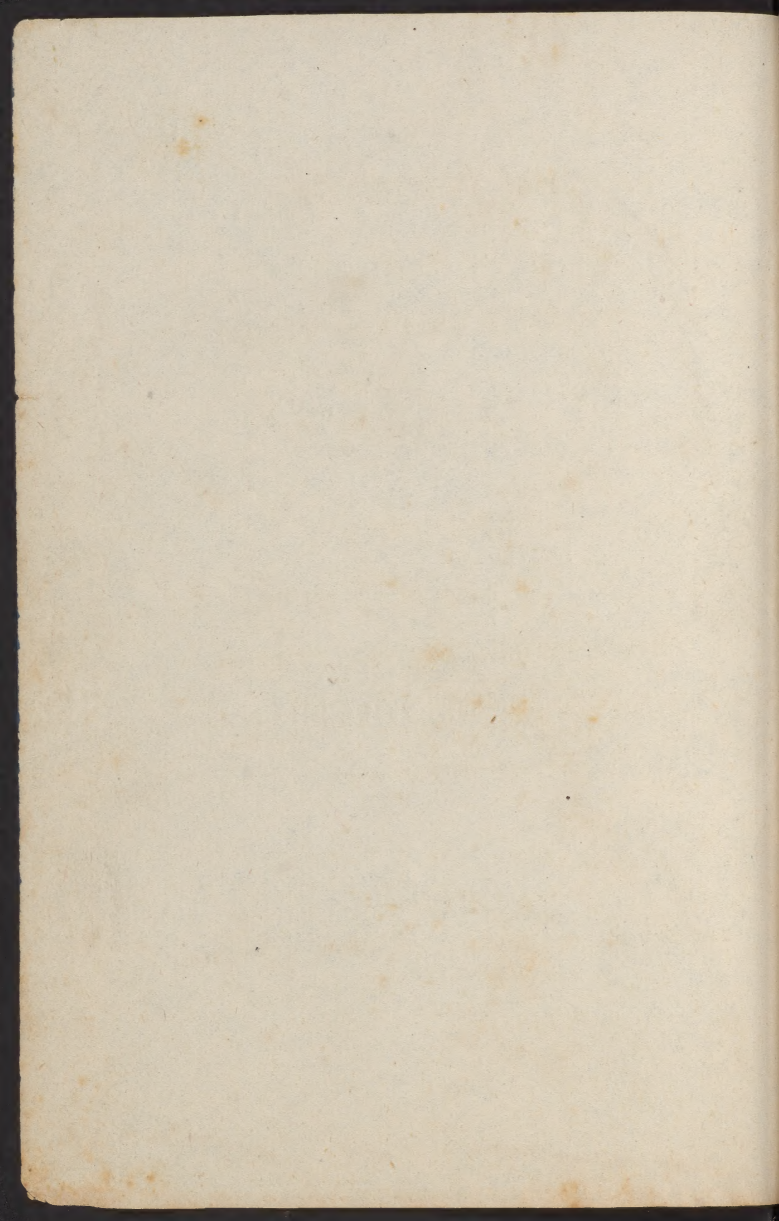
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John F. Colver
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THE ROUTINE

OF

CHRISTIAN RESTRAINT

A DISCOURSE

HEARD AT

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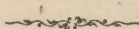
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THE DOCTRINE
OF
CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

John F. Goucher
Number.....



To many here present it is superfluous to mention that the Bible is replete with inconsistencies and absurdities. Some of our countrymen, however, appear to be of opinion that this imputation goes far towards being groundless when viewed in relation to that portion of the scriptures, denominated the New Testament. They are not of course prepared to swallow with ease the stories and tales which abound in the writings of the Jewish prophets. The Mosaic account of the creation, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, the universal fall in a single pair, the endless series of idle ceremonies said to have been enjoined by the Deity, the sun stopt in his mid-day career, the image with the golden head, the isolated hand that wrote of Belshazzar's approaching ruin, the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and a host of other strange things, appear without hesitation to be too much for the credulity of even the most superficial reader of the scriptures. These irrelevancies are too glaring to be overlooked and are calculated to attract the attention of the most careless examiner. No force of argument, no ingenious interpretation, no appeals to feeling can possibly succeed in reconciling such marvels and prodigies to reason and common sense. On their very

face they bear the stamp of falsehood. As such they appear revolting to all except those blinded by the prejudices of education, debarred from truth by the circumstances of birth and social position, warped and perverted by the interests of profession. We then reasonably expect that men who have received the light of ennobling knowledge shall not fail to perceive them in their genuine colors. The wonder is, however, that a number of enlightened natives seem inclined to view the New Testament as nearly devoid of all inconsistencies and grossness. The stories it contains are deemed more rational—the philosophy it propounds is considered more sound. The fact is, the imperfections of the old dispensation are apparent, while those of the new may be called *latent*. We shall now endeavour to dispel this misapprehension. To have this object effected to a certain extent, we will in this night's discourse dwell on that grand doctrine of the Christian faith—aye the doctrine of the resurrection, so minutely delineated in the Epistles—involving difficulties which no metaphysical ingenuity can surmount, and mysteries which no floods of divine light can illuminate.

The doctrine of resurrection viewed in combination with the paraphernalia of final judgment is a thing quite unique in itself, and does credit to the fertile imagination of those that conceived it in all its splendid coloring. Philosophers and sages in the very beginning ridiculed and laughed at it. The saviour of the Christians had not long departed from the present scene of action, ere the neophytes recently initiated into his faith, began to betray symptoms of infidelity in regard to this leading truth of the gospel. They could hardly be persuaded to believe that at the

fiat of the returning Messiah the bodies of men shall rise from their graves, and flock around his tribunal anxiously waiting to hear the joyful decree of being received into the kingdom of heaven, or the wrathful sentence of being chained in hell, "where hope doth not come that comes to all." The example of their lord and the preaching of the apostles had not succeeded in producing the conviction that the dead should awake at the sound of trumpets and clarions, and the shouts of angels and archangels that would accompany their redeemer to the scene of universal adjudication. This is evident from what the apostle Paul says in his first Epistle to the Corinthians:—"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not &c. &c." (Chap. XV. 12-15.) The writer goes on in this strain, proving the truth of resurrection in his peculiar way, and depicting the various results thereof in colors as vivid as they could appear to the keen eye of prophecy. Christian divines would fain have an excuse for the spread of this disbelief in the primitive Church in regard to an important item of revelation by the supposition of a Sadducee being then at the head of the sceptical followers above represented. "A person who reads the Epistles to the Corinthians with reference to this object," says an eminent theologian, "will easily perceive that there was at least one heretical teacher at the head of the

faction in the Corinthian Church, who refused submission to the authority of the apostle. This man seems evidently to have been a Jew, and was probably a Sadducee, as he brought over several members of this Church to the great Sadducean error, the denial of a future state. To remove this error from that Church, and to prevent its existence ever afterward, was obviously the design of St. Paul in writing this chapter."* The writer laboring to extenuate the startling nature of what thus early appeared to be a schism, imputes it altogether to the heretical machinations of a Sadducean leader. But an observer devoid of interest and prejudice, would be too apt to ascribe the phenomenon to the insidious influence of Athenian philosophy, since we know well that in the city where Socrates had discoursed, and Plato philosophised, an inspired preacher of the gospel was derided, and his words provoked the significant appellation of *babbler* because he spoke of the Resurrection.

Is the Christian prepared to adduce any valid evidence to substantiate the strange dogma that God is to sit in solemn judgment on an appointed day, arrayed in all the pomp of royalty, and call up the unsubstantial frames of the dead from the dust to which they must have been reduced? Can he from the very constitution of things infer *a priori* that a phenomenon so absurd to common sense and so untenable in the eye of reason, shall come to pass in a distant futurity, and realize the tales which have been promulgated in relation to it? Can he by dint of reasoning, by any form of sound argumentation, by an appeal to the stubborn facts of history, or by a refer-

* Dwight's Theology Vol. II.

ence to the startling deductions of science—can he I repeat, in any way succeed in producing in us a conviction that our souls should after attaining freedom be again confined in corporeal frames as alluded to, and subjected to their grosser laws? Can he by ransacking nature and searching into the obscure nooks of creation, lay hold of any thing in the vegetable or the animal world that might be tortured to furnish an analogy illustrative of an universal rising from the grave? The believer of the Bible replies with an air of anticipated triumph :—"Against the resurrection itself there is no presumption, and in favor of it a strong one, from analogy. Many works of God naturally and strongly dispose the mind to admit the doctrine without hesitation." In the bleak regions of the north, he might urge, vegetation appears to be at once withered and scathed by the chilling breath of winter, but it revives beautifying the field and valley with the soft advance of spring. In the insect creation, the most loathsome worm after wrapping itself in a shroud of its own formation is found to rise out of it with new lustre and beauty. Subjected to the severe scrutiny of reason, the analogy, however convincing to the believers of the Bible, appears to be deficient in an essential point. The revival of trees and plants at the approach of a milder season, and the metamorphosis of insects in certain stages of their existence, cannot bear a close resemblance to the resurrection of the human frame. The resuscitation of the latter is said to come off when the atoms composing it have been altogether dissipated to the four winds of heaven, as to the former the most careless observer will assuredly find that the action of the vital principle is only rendered more visible after it has

continued for sometime dull and inactive. Nature does not furnish any instance in the animal or vegetable world distinctly pointing out to us that a thing revives wherein life has been fairly extinct. The indestructibility of the soul is evident—it shall, it must survive the body, for we feel, as well as see it in the eye of reason. What evidence have we that the material frame in which it has been lodged for a while will again be formed after the same fashion for its reception at an indefinitely distant hour that has been ever receding from the expectant believer like the illusive *mirage* of the desert? It is a gratuitous assumption that such an unprecedented phenomenon should ever come forth to the wonder of mankind and all created beings. It is not enough to learn that the bible, the so-called book of God, has it solemnly recorded on its sacred pages, and authoritatively declares its speedy arrival. It is not enough that the apostles of Jesus have delineated in all their minutiae the various particulars relating to the marvellous re-appearance of our physical frames during the millenium. On the unsupported authority of the bible we cannot receive so strange a dogma; on the mere assertion of its reputed prophets and saints we cannot believe it. The *burden of proof* lies on the Christians; they are bound to adduce adequate reasons to substantiate it, independent of their sacred scriptures. The point under consideration is like one of those things which considered in themselves it is as difficult to confute as to prove. They have wisely thrown it into the region of uncertainty; scepticism cannot reach it with facility, and sound logic cannot easily have sufficient data on which it might safely plant its batteries. Mysticism, the invulnerable armor of

error, shrouds it altogether, and keeps it unharmed by the weapons of reasoning. Should an astronomer, for instance, take it into his head to broach on mankind the theory, that beings inhabiting the earth's satellite were so constituted as to live independent of air and water, and had their visual organs so far multiplied as to have them scattered in abundance all over their frames like *Indra* of the Hindu pantheon, we could hardly say anything for or against it, as it lay evidently beyond the pale of demonstration or disproof. Should the same philosophic maniac positively aver that the Georgium Sidus is peopled with creatures endowed with seventy-four senses more than we possess, and having a distinct knowledge of eighty different essential properties of matter, what could we do but hear the tale in utter amazement? Things like these are securely lodged beyond the limits of inquiry and observation; and under the same category is to be ranked the doctrine of Christian resurrection.

Before I proceed further in the discussion of the subject, it is advisable to consider the state in which the soul is supposed to be immediately after its leaving the body. Here I take the opportunity to refer to the great diversity of opinions that obtains among the Christians in regard to it. Some of them believe that the moment the soul is set free from the corporeal frame in which it is lodged, it enters the presence of the deity, and is visited with a due proportion of the rewards and punishments it deserves. The sinner is immediately condemned to hell and its everlasting fire; the righteous are at once admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Theologians of a certain class would fain have a mid-

dle state for the departed soul ; they do not like that its destinies should so soon be settled : It is doomed *to be a tiptoe with expectation* till the great day of judgment. They make out an intermediate place called by the Greeks *Hades*, and known to the Hebrews under the name of *Sheol*. Here the disembodied spirit is destined to pine away until the arrival of the great judge who will, according to the far-famed standard of Christian revelation, either cast it to the worm that dieth not, or make it an heir of eternal happiness. “ There has been,” says a celebrated writer, “ no small debate among divines, and those of great reputation, concerning the places where the dead will reside between their departure from this world and the final judgment. This subject demands too extensive a consideration to be attempted at the present time. It must be acknowledged, that the language of the scriptures furnishes a foundation for some difference of opinion concerning it. Several expressions, found in both Testaments, seem to indicate an intermediate scene of existence, between this world and the final scene of retribution.” * * * * *

“ But whatever may be true,” he adds, “ concerning an intermediate place of existence, there can, I apprehend be no reasonable doubt concerning an intermediate state. St. Peter says of the angels that sinned, that God ‘ cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.’ St. Jude also declares them ‘ reserved,’ in like manner, ‘ unto the judgment of the great day.’ From these declarations it is manifest, that fallen angels have not yet received their final judgment, nor of course their final reward. This indeed seems evident from the phraseology used by St. Peter,

as well as by the declarations of both him and St. Jude." The Bible does not enlighten us on this important subject, and carefully avoids a distinct relation of the circumstances attending the departed spirit. It takes shelter, as is often the case, under a cloud of ambiguities and vagueness of style. The prophet Daniel says "and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt." XII. 2. The apostle John declares too, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." V. 28,29. If we were allowed to interpret the foregoing sentences as they would mean in common acceptation, we should fairly conclude that in the opinion of the adherents of Jesus dead men must sleep "in the dust of the earth" until the morning of the resurrection. Most assuredly their repose is to be of a very long duration. It is not certain when oblivious *Somnus* will cease to favor them with her soporific influences. They shall awake at the magic sound of celestial trumpets and angelic songs. But the *acumen* of theologians and the visions of the faithful have hitherto failed to predict the precise time that would bring about a consummation so eagerly desired. Those that have any knowledge of the various interpretations of passages in the gospel relating to the point under consideration, will feel much amused in perceiving how regularly it has eluded the hopes of ardent believers of very age; it has shifted its positions as a rainbow does from the fool that runs after

it. This led the celebrated author of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" to indulge in a truthful sarcasm when he boldly affirmed that "the revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation."

To return to our subject: we learn, on the authority of men said to be inspired, that the body is destined to rise hereafter from the dust of the grave with enhanced brightness, as the phoenix of old was believed periodically to spring from its ashes with a plumage more brilliant than it previously possessed. In that state of ineffable bliss which the eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived, it will awake again clothed in all splendor and glory, and be like unto him whose fiat shall call it forth from the bed of dust on which it reposes. The promise thus held out is indeed flattering and appears to be a little too cheering; it exerted of course a considerable influence, as we know from history, on the propagation of Christianity. In regard to the body thus raised the apostle confidently predicts: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." I Cor. XV. 42-44. He further states: "Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. So when this corruptible

shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory," I Cor. XV. 51-54. It is evident from the above statements that the dead shall rise endowed with altogether new qualities and strange powers; our physical frame shall not then be subject to diseases and distempers which flesh is heir to. Burning fever or slow-wasting consumption, loathsome leprosy or benumbing paralysis shall not be permitted to visit it in new-built Salem. Plagues and epidemics that can "thin nations in an hour" shall not be allowed to extend their ravages to the sacred regions of everlasting happiness. Hoary age must not stupify the limbs, eternal youth shall attend the blessed inhabitant. In fine, decay and corruption shall have no concern with the dead of whom the restitution is thus made. Further, it is deducible from the above quotations that there is to be on the occasion a considerable accession of their power or physical strength. The things that are lazily done here with *Liliputian* attempts will be dispatched there with Herculean might and lightning swiftness. The shrivelled arm that can now hardly wield the sword or throw the lance in defence of freedom, is then to be nerved with the strength of an Ajax or Achilles. The emaciated and feeble sufferer that ventures not to lift up the blow at his ruthless oppressor, shall not be less potent than the tyrant whose victim he now happens to be. Physical deficiencies, it is said, are not to be seen there. The lame shall walk, the blind shall see, the dumb shall speak, and the deaf shall hear. Thus has the amusing tale been related by poetic imagination with all the seriousness of religious bigotry at which gravity

can hardly refrain from betraying the symptoms of risibility.

“ Old men, that on their staff, bending, had leaned,
 Crazy and frail, or sat, benumbed with age ;
 In weary listlessness, ripe for the grave,
 Felt through their sluggish veins and withered limbs
 New vigor flow ; The wrinkled face grew smooth ;
 Upon the head, that time had razored bare,
 Rose bushy locks, and as his son, in prime
 Of strength and youth, the aged father stood.
 Changing herself, the mother saw her son,
 Grow up, and suddenly put on the form
 Of manhood ; and the wretch that begging sat
 Limbless, deformed, at corner of the way,
 Unmindful of his crutch, in joint and limb
 Arose complete ; and he, that on the bed,
 Of mortal sickness, worn with sore distress,
 Lay breathing forth his soul to death, felt now,
 The tide of life and vigor rushing back ;
 And looking up, beheld his weeping wife,
 And daughter fond, that, o’er him bending stooped,
 To close his eyes. The frantic madman, too,
 In whose confused brain reason had lost
 Her sway, long driven at random to and fro,
 Grew sober, and his manacles fell off ;
 The newly-sheeted corpse arose and stared
 On those who dressed it ; and the confined dead,
 That men were bearing to the tomb, awoke,
 And mingled with their friends ; and armies which
 The trump surprised, met in the furious shock
 Of battle, saw the bleeding ranks, new fallen,
 Rise up at once, and to their ghastly cheeks,
 Return the stream of life in healthy flow ;
 And as the anatomist, with all his band
 Of rude disciples, o’er the subject hung,
 And unpolitely hewed his way through bones
 And muscles of the sacred human form,
 Exposing barbarously to wanton gaze,

The mysteries of nature, joint embraced
 His kindred joint, the wounded flesh grew up,
 And suddenly the injured man awoke,
 Among their hands, and stood arrayed complete
 In immortality, forgiving scarce,
 The insult offered to his clay in death.”*

The strange tale of absurdities above related hardly bears a parallel in the whole range of ancient or modern fiction. Picture to your imagination the astounding description of monsters like “the anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders,” or those resembling the *Norwegian Kraken*, “which God of all his works created hugest that swim the ocean stream,” all these fade away when contrasted with the wonders of the resurrection. Talk of the prodigies of Arctic regions so fondly rehearsed by adventurous seamen, or the marvellous stories of travellers that enhance the value of their works by overleaping the bounds of probability, these too can hardly bear away the palm in strangeness and oddity. The wondrous fiction of Christian resurrection is enough to strike any body dumb with astonishment, and yields to nothing in point of unreasonableness. This has been prudently anticipated by the assertion—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Again, the dead shall be raised in glory. Flesh and blood are not to inherit the kingdom of God. Physical deformity, want of symmetry, absence of personal attractions, and dark sooty complexion—a complexion so resolutely hated by those that now stand in the van of civilization—a complexion which

is the readiest passport in India to kicks and blows, broken ribs and bruised limbs—cannot be expected to have any room in the city which, as the language of revelation represents, “had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof.” The body must be adapted in every way to the nature of the place it should inhabit. Writers on Christianity are often disposed to allege that there must exist a suitable harmony between that happy region and the condition, though external it might only be, of its favored inhabitants. There should not only be found an exact fitness subsisting between the moral and intellectual qualifications of the redeemed and that revealed abode of ineffable bliss; but the properties of their persons must also be adapted to the nature of the new-formed Salem.

“ In the heart

No passion touches a discordant string
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not. The pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.”

Fancy, unchecked by the sober influence of reason, would fain represent the glowing person of the happy believer emitting brilliant rays of glory like the orient sun darting its arrows of light over the creation around, much after the mode perhaps in which superstition often paints the face of a canonized saint, surrounded with a halo of pointed beams. To avoid all misapprehension, I must not omit to state that the remarks made above refer in particular to the bodies of them alone who have any faith in the purifying efficacy of the blood of Jesus; while those of men whose misfortune it has been to be branded with the vague

appellation of unbelievers, "shall be raised from the grave by Christ as their offended judge," and endued with strength and immortality, only to be rendered capable of eternal misery.

There yet remains something to be told far more startling than the curious tale of irrelevancies already recited. What I speak of is a rare *chef-d'œuvre*, and does much credit to the soaring imagination of those that conceived it. With unmistakable clearness it is averred that the dead shall arise on the day of judgment with bodies *spiritualized*. Paul expressly declares in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This, it must be confessed, is a novel attempt to make the extremes meet together. It forms the very apex of the stupendous pyramid made up of the host of inconsistencies with which christianity abounds. It yields the palm to none of the whole species and is justly entitled to a rank of the first importance from its superior unreasonableness. It bears distinct marks of the finishing stroke it has received from error and vain hope combined. We have indeed seen that philosophers, addicted to grossness of conception and apparently incapable of forming a nobler idea respecting the human soul, have left no stone unturned and no resource untried to prove it material; vigorous attempts have thus been made to annihilate all notions of spirituality. It is the privilege of inspiration, however, to be diametrically opposed to this. Here is a strange endeavour made to *spiritualize matter*, if I be allowed the expression. The object of the sacred writers has been to introduce into the kingdom of heaven a peculiar sort of *spiritualism*.

The human body unencumbered with flesh and bones will according to them float in space with a facility hardly equaled by the feathered inhabitants of the air. Hunger and thirst it will not know; fatigue and depression of spirits cannot reach it. The clumsy apparatus of digestion is to be entirely dispensed with; and its functions of motion need not be regulated by the rude mechanism of muscles and nerves. Thus equipped and gifted, it might in defiance of gravitation ascend to the ethereal firmament, dart in all directions with unimaginable swiftness and descend into the profoundest depths without the fear of a precipitate fall. So singularly formed and circumstanced, it might launch into the boundless ocean of space and run erratic through a *wilderness of stars*. Unrestrained by the laws of material creation, it shall rise up to the light of the *empyrean* like Enoch and Elijah of old, and feast its eyes enraptured on the novel sight of cherubs and seraphs waving their expanded plumage in those mansions of imagined bliss. No way incommoded in its multifarious movements by the gross contrivance of tough bones and stiff joints, it might be quite prepared by the suppleness of its limbs to shrink itself into the size of the smallest pigmy ever sung by the Scian muse, or swell at will to the mighty stature of the giants of ancient fable. Thus after the fashion of those brought up in the scholastic philosophy of the dark ages, we may have grounds sufficient to say that the frames so metamorphosed can with incomparable facility shoot through the hole of a needle, or if it please them, dance on its sharp point in multitudes. Never were the lines of Milton so appropriately applicable as on the present occasion :

"They but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount;

* * * * *

Thus incorporeal spirits to smallest forms
Reduced their shapes immense; and were at large,
Though without number still, amidst the hall
Of that infernal court."

Bodies incorporeal! Matter spiritualized! Were there ever such incoherent incongruities huddled together? It is an unpardonable contradiction in terms as well as in ideas. We might as consistently speak of a shadowy substance or substantial shade, a luminous darkness or transparent opacity, a burning cold or freezing heat—unless with poets we imagine extremes meeting together. Vulgar imagination cannot be startled, and the mass of the faithful cannot be set agape with astonishment without an unscrupulous profusion of things that admit of being realized only in visions of the chosen few. To deal in mysticism is pre-eminently the province of inspiration—blind faith and all-conceding credulity are called in to lend their due share of aid. Its unintelligible figures and emblems which the believer is exclusively privileged to understand vanish before the beams of reason and common sense.

We are naturally inclined to ask by what motives the sacred writers were actuated in publishing to the world a riddle of so startling a nature. They strove perhaps to form a very desirable combination of spiritual enjoyments with sensual pleasures; and in order to avoid the grossness of the latter, they conceived the medium through which they were

to be communicated, must be attenuated and rendered exceedingly subtle. The attempt, however, proved suicidal. Trying to secure the extreme fineness of what was to answer their purpose by its physical characters alone, they succeeded in securing inanity. But the idea is by no means a novel one. The ancients might in this respect claim the credit of originality.

Homer, the father of poesy, believed the dead to be transformed into thin shades or reduced to a peculiar kind of subtle substance. The infernal world that owned its allegiance to the iron rule of Pluto, was according to him peopled with numerous hordes of empty phantoms. The ghostly shapes to which frequent allusion is made in the mythology of the Greeks and Romans appear to have been certain strange things between material and immaterial natures ; they partook of the properties of both, and yet in strictness could not be classed with either. We find them gifted with every sense almost save that of feeling. Ulysses is thus represented by Homer attempting in vain to embrace the shade of his affectionate mother.

“Thrice in my arms I strove her shade to bind,
Thrice thro’ my arms she slipped like empty wind,
Or dreams, the vain illusions of the mind.”

Virgil speaks similarly of the inhabitants of hell, and thus describes how an army of shadowy figures stood before Charon pressing for “passage with extended hands.”

“An airy crowd came rushing where he stood,
Which filled the margin of the fatal flood—
Husbands and wives, boys and unmarried maids,
And mighty heroes’ more majestic shades,
And youths, intombed before their fathers’ eyes
With hollow groans, and shrieks and feeble cries.”

Any individual with a moderate share of impartiality will not find much difficulty in perceiving that these shadowy phantoms of the ancients were not far different from the spiritual bodies of the Christian resurrection.

Whether the *same* body will rise from the grave has been a point of interminable dispute among the Christian divines. Some of them firmly hold that, as far as the substance is concerned, the bodies raised shall be the same, "although they shall be endued with different qualities; for were not this the case it would be a creation, and not a resurrection:" while others as confidently affirm the contrary. Thus the theologian Dwight—one of this number—declares his opinion on the subject: "Another source of perplexity with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection, has been the question, whether the same body will be raised? A question extensively agitated with no small ardour and anxiety. All the difficulties which attend the subject are derived, as it appears to me, either from extending our philosophical enquiries beyond the power of the understanding to answer them, as is sometimes done, or from neglecting to settle what we intend by sameness. If the question intends, whether the same atoms which have composed our bodies in the present world, will constitute the body raised at the final day, both reason and revelation answer in the negative. The whole number of particles, which have, at different times, constituted the body of man, during his progress through life, will undoubtedly be sufficient to constitute many such bodies." The bible furnishes passages to support both sides. Both parties maintain their ground by interpreting the scriptures in their own way. This is,

however, the best comment on the *clear* light of revelation and the oft-spoken fallibility of *unassisted reason*. From what has already been stated in the foregoing pages in reference to the new properties to be engrafted on the resuscitated frames designed for the multitudes of wandering spirits, it is evident that they shall be totally different from what they now appear to be. No subtle ingenuity by torturing passages, and no specious sophistry by bamboozling sound sense can prevent them from being deemed as new creations. We can by no means call this a *resurrection*. It is a *shere* abuse of the expression. All is changed, save the outlines perhaps, and the wonder is that people still choose to call it a "rising from the grave".

To conclude: the above is no exaggerated picture of the absurdities deducible from the doctrine of Christian resurrection. Compared to the outlandish tales so often rehearsed in relation to it, the ridiculous stories of Hinduism appear as authentic facts. Compared to the apprehension that will not blush to believe in a thing so void of sense, sanctioned as it might be by the consent of ages and nations, the credulity that implicitly confides in monstrous fables palmed by a selfish hierarchy, is certainly wisdom of no ordinary nature.

Baffled in their attempts, defeated in their object, and outwitted in their insidious policy, *missionaries of the cross* feel not ashamed in giving publicity to the *hobbies* of their system, their unreasonable dogmas, and religious fictions which would befit the nursery to lull infants to sleep rather than serve to be the ground-work of a nation's faith. In the face of absurdities such as have been related in the preced-

ing pages, it would by no means indicate good sense in Christian preachers addressing Hindu assemblies to expatiate over the vagaries of *Pooranism*. In the face of things so repugnant to reason it would be sheer dullness in the evangelical party to provoke a mob of idolators to rage by a lashing satire on the wonders of Indra's heaven with millions of gods for its inmates and the whole circle of sensual pleasures they go through. In the face of such a tissue of untenable falsehoods, it would be idle to maintain the fancied soundness of the scriptures against the absurd cosmogony of the *Veds*, primeval worship of the elements and prayers offered to the sun, moon and stars, and revel in the enjoyment of dwelling on them with a considerable share of self-complacency. In the face of conceits so perfectly opposed to philosophy and logic, it would be quite useless to inveigh against systems of religion, however unreasonable in their nature, and rail at doctrines fraught with inconsistencies however revolting to common sense. In the face of errors so gross and glaring, it would be no prudential policy on the part of a Christian to thunder against the unreasonableness of a fellow-creature's belief, and thus run the risk of having his stentorian voice silenced by the cutting reply—"He that lives in a house of glass should not pelt at others."

